



Best Practices for Optimizing Local SEO and the User Experience across Multiple Screens



A Digital Marketing Depot Whitepaper





Executive Summary

Mobile devices now represent one-quarter of global Internet use; mobile search accounts for one-third of all search. Perhaps even more important for search marketers, nearly 80 percent of local searches on mobile devices turn into purchases, and almost 90 percent of those purchases are made in a physical store, according to comScore research sponsored by Neustar Localeze and 15miles.

Creating a relevant, compelling online user experience across digital screens is critical for capturing this growing search audience. This whitepaper explores the importance of delivering optimized user experiences by screen size, as well as the steps necessary for developing an effective mobile and local SEO strategy. The whitepaper presents local SEO best practices for desktop, tablet and mobile users, including examples from national home security brand ADT’s mobile search initiatives.

Note: This whitepaper is based on a webcast from Digital Marketing Depot. Thanks to the original contributors: **Bill Connard**, vice president of local search solutions, Rio SEO; **Michael Martin**, SEO manager, Covario; and **Douglas Cohen**, interactive marketing consultant, ADT. To view the on-demand version of this webcast, please visit <http://digitalmarketingdepot.com/webcast/optimizing-local-seo-user-experience-across-multiple-screens>.

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Three steps to developing an effective mobile and local strategy

The foundation for an effective mobile and local strategy begins with mobile-optimized local landing pages that recognize user devices. These pages can be built using either responsive design or separate templates. The best choice for your organization will depend on your current site structure and the layout and structure of your mobile experience, i.e., whether you want to deliver the same or different content according to device, and how quickly you want those pages to load.

The one imperative is that your technology recognizes the user's device and can direct each consumer to the best possible experience. Today's savvy internet consumers have high expectations for their mobile experiences. They want pages that are optimized and responsive to load quickly with the relevant information or website for which they are looking. The next step, therefore, is to deliver separate mobile pages and point the mobile canonical URL to the desktop landing page (and vice versa).

Measure local SEO for mobile

After you have built mobile-optimized local landing pages and can deliver a quality user experience, you need to begin measuring the impact of your local SEO for mobile. You'll want answers to questions such as:

- *Where are users coming from?*
- *What are mobile users doing when they get to our site or app? Leaving, downloading coupons or clicking to call our local store?*

By analyzing search traffic patterns and reporting on click activity by device, you can establish and maintain KPIs that demonstrate the ROI of your local efforts.

An important metric for measuring the impact of local search traffic is to track organic visits by device. This will allow you to measure growth or declines by iPad or tablet users, for example. When you identify patterns in the devices used by your mobile audience, you'll be able to ensure your content is optimized for those users

Build mobile link equity

Building mobile link equity is the critical third step in implementing your mobile and local SEO strategy. This is done by syndicating your local landing page URLs to all major search engines, including Google, Yahoo!, and Bing. Then attach those URLs to your map listings as well.

All of your local listings should be distributed throughout the local search ecosystem, which encompasses:

- Data aggregators such as Acxiom, InfoUSA, Neustar Localeze and Factual;
- Niche directories such as Angie's List, Realtor.com and Craigslist;
- Internet yellow pages such as Yelp and Superpages.com;
- In-car GPS systems such as Tom Tom, Garmin and OnStar;
- Mobile applications; and
- Social networks including Facebook, Pinterest and LinkedIn.

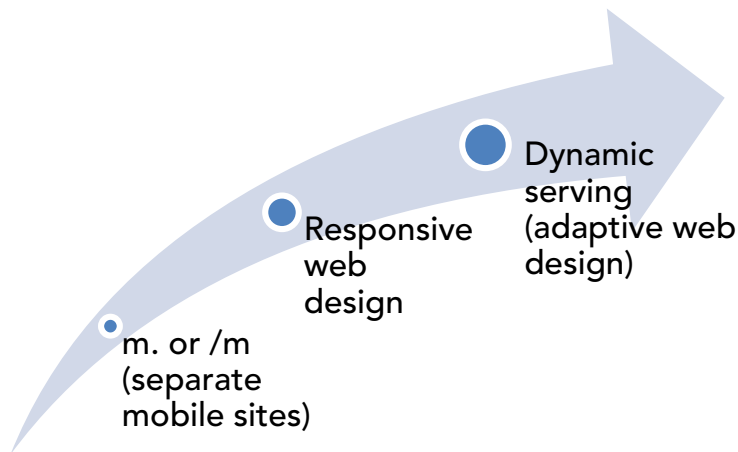
“
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Drive traffic with best practice mobile SEO

The connection between mobile consumers and local search is becoming well established. Nearly three-quarters of search results differ for desktop versus mobile users who are searching for localized keywords like “pizza,” “gas station” or “hospital.” When there is no demonstrated local intent – such as searching for generic terms like “laptop,” “server” or “Apple” – nearly half of search page results are the same for both desktop and mobile users.

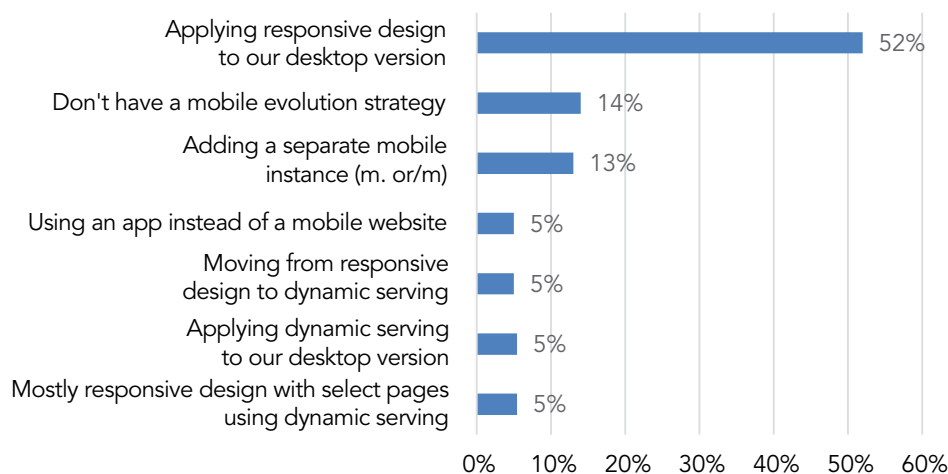
In response, search marketers have become much more sophisticated about mobile SEO, evolving from developing simple .mobi sites and m. mobile directories to creating sites that use responsive design, and most recently, dynamic serving or adaptive design.

“It’s the old “tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you told them” game.”



Currently, more than half of search marketers surveyed by Digital Marketing Depot are applying responsive design to their desktop sites. Another 13 percent are adding a separate mobile site (m. or /m) to their desktop version. Just 5 percent said they are either applying dynamic serving to their desktop version or moving from responsive design to dynamic serving. The strategy that you choose to drive mobile traffic will vary depending on your business needs and your available resources.

What is your mobile strategy evolution?



Source: Digital Marketing Depot

Separate mobile sites

Developing and maintaining a mobile site that is separate and distinct from your desktop site requires two sets of HTML. Mobile coding should optimize the title tag, meta tag and content for mobile intent. For Google to distinguish between your mobile and desktop sites, you must have within the head code "rel canonical" to the desktop version and then "rel alternate" from the desktop page to the smartphone version (and feature phone version when applicable).

Responsive web design (RWD)

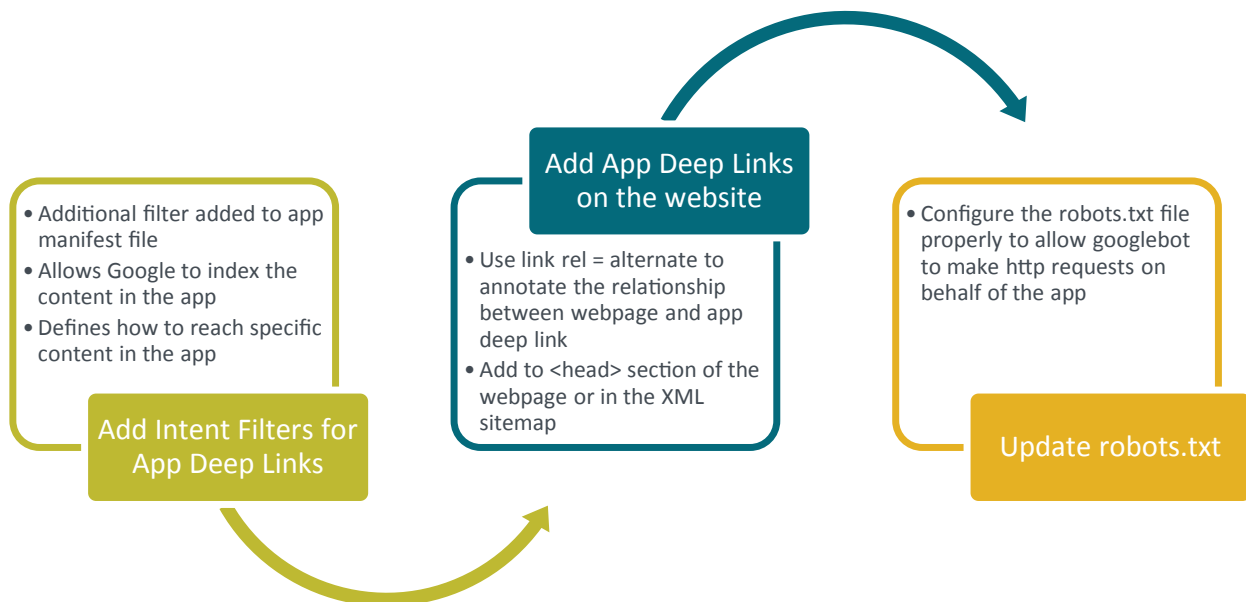
Responsive web design (RWD) uses the same URL for mobile and desktop users, and one set of HTML across all device types. To distinguish between mobile and desktop users, the CSS renders the code differently as far as what is visually presented. Currently, this is the method that Google prefers because its crawlers only need to crawl one set of HTML, which is easier for the search engine. But for search marketers, RWD squeezes in mobile optimization with the desktop HTML, using some explicit mobile terminology. With all of that variation in code, RWD can result in relatively slow page load times. To reduce load time, you must reduce "round time," or the number of times the device must go back to the cell tower.

Dynamic serving or adaptive design

Dynamic serving or adaptive design uses the same URL for both desktop and mobile users, but a separate HTML based on the device type. Dynamic serving provides explicit pages – including mobile optimized title tags, meta tags and content – that are directed toward the user's intent, not just screen size. A "Vary HTTP Header" on the server is the flag to the Googlebots to index the URL as a mobile site. Dynamic serving allows search marketers to focus on user intent, rather than device, to provide relevant content and calls to action.

Next evolution: app indexing

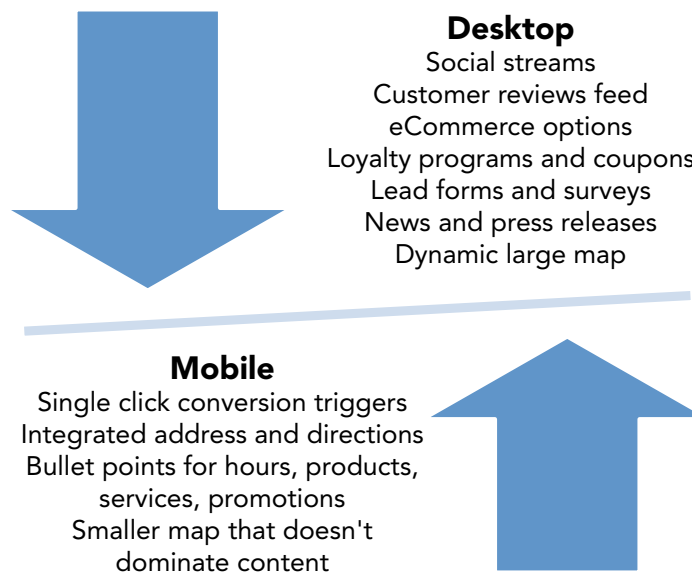
Google is currently beta testing app indexing, which is the next evolution of best practice mobile SEO. The search engine is indexing content in Android apps. Deep links for these apps will appear in Google search results for signed-in Android users.



Developing an effective local plus mobile user experience

When it comes to developing a compelling local search experience, there are clear differences between the wants and needs of desktop and mobile users. Desktop users want a robust local experience that includes engaging page content featuring multiple interactive elements. Your focus should be to drive local business with numerous elements that accurately represent what you do. Specifically, you should provide more content for desktop users, including customer reviews, social streams, ecommerce options, lead forms, surveys, news, press releases, coupons, and a dynamic large map that directs users to the local business.

Mobile users want a simplified experience that provides relevant information in a slimmed-down format, i.e., bullet-point lists of hours, products and services. The call to action should be easy to execute in one or two clicks to trigger a phone call to the local business or load directions to the smartphone, for example. If you have to use a lead form, limit the number of fields that need to be filled in to four or less. Your sales team can always request more data after you've captured their email address and identified their purchase intent.



Case study: ADT Security Services

Home security marketer ADT is one national brand that has learned the value of investing in best practice local and mobile search. The company enjoys widespread brand recognition, but has found that consumers search locally for home security services. ADT executives recommend the following actions, which have helped the company improve the consumer mobile experience and drive local sales.

Plan and test media according to existing analytics

The majority of national marketers building out a mobile app or site already have a desktop website and are measuring that site's performance through such analytics programs as Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics or Webtrends. By mining existing user data, you can identify the types of devices your desktop users own or use to access your information. ADT executives found that their mobile audience skewed toward Apple devices, particularly iPads and iPhones. The demographics of Apple users trend upscale with more disposable income than younger mobile audiences, making the mobile audience a good target for the company's home security systems.

Optimize top-performing desktop pages and geographic areas

Prioritize existing content by identifying your most effective desktop pages and optimize that content for your mobile audience through responsive design. Since you've already identified which mobile devices represent your largest mobile audience, marketers should work with your development team to optimize the experience for that user base. It will be too difficult to test for every mobile phone or tablet.

Pages can be localized by featuring names, addresses and phone numbers; tracking numbers with local area codes; maps; and "make an appointment" calls to action. By including your location's name, address and phone number, you increase your brand's search engine rankings and make it easier for mobile users to store your phone numbers in their contact lists for future follow up. Users can also save the location pinpoint in their Google accounts, which means they can later save the location on their desktop and transfer it to any device.

Drive mobile sales

ADT's marketing is very phone-centric. The company drives leads through its national call center and then parcels them out to local sales teams. Prospects and customers don't realize they are calling a central location because the mobile page features local addresses and phone numbers.

To drive phone calls, the brand's mobile sites feature multiple inbound call hot links on the top, center and bottom of the page. There is one singular image in the page header to focus the user's attention, with a search field to find the local office and a location identifier. Additional content is available through drop-down menus that expand or contract according to screen size. Consumers who want more information before they contact the company can open those menus.

Conclusion: The mobile plus local imperative

Reaching your prospects and customers with the right message, at the right time and in the right place is critical for success in today's mobile landscape. Consumers have come to expect a relevant, fast and easy mobile experience that quickly takes them where they want to go to purchase the products and services they need. As internet marketing technology continues to evolve, achieving this goal is easier than ever before. With a clear strategy and a trusted technology partner, today's national marketers can develop a strong mobile plus local user experience that drives sales and creates measurable ROI. ■



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About Rio SEO

Rio SEO Local Search powers store finder software, mobile store finder software, and local business listing management software. We offer Automated Local SEO services to multi-location businesses allowing them to optimize, distribute, and claim their local listings in Google, Yahoo, Bing, Infogroup expressupdate, Neustar Localeze, Acxiom, Factual, Yext, Social Networks and other online local data aggregators. Based in San Diego, Rio SEO is among the largest independent providers of SaaS based, local SEO automation solutions and patented SEO reporting tools. Customers include brand marketers, retailers, and digital agencies. More information about Rio SEO is available by calling 858.876.3010 or online at www.RioSEO.com.

About Digital Marketing Depot and Third Door Media

Digital Marketing Depot is the premiere resource center for digital marketing strategies and tactics, providing whitepapers, research reports, and webinars for digital marketers and advertisers.

Digital Marketing Depot is a division of Third Door Media, Inc. Third Door Media's mission is to empower interactive and search marketing professionals by providing trusted content and community services they need to be successful.

Third Door Media produces the conference series **Search Marketing Expo - SMX**, which includes SMX Advanced, SMX East and other SMX conferences. Third Door Media also publishes **Search Engine Land** and **Marketing Land**, which provide news, analysis and tutorials to help internet marketers do their jobs more effectively.